

Week Eight: Manners of Eating and Weddings

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THE IMPORTANCE OF EATING MANNERS

[1] Eating manners are very important since it is repeated many times every day.

It must be done properly whether eating alone, with family, or with friends.

To avoid pretenses, you should train yourself in proper eating manners, whether alone or with your family.

It will then become a natural part of your behaviour, and you will be at ease at the table.

THE MANNERS OF EATING

[1] There are certain table manners that are indispensable. Say 'Bismillah' when starting, to thank Allah and say 'Alhamdulillah' when finished.

[2] Eat what is in front of you.

[3] Eat using your right hand.

A hypocrite was eating with his left hand when the Prophet saw him and advised him to eat with his right. The man falsely said 'But I cannot' The Prophet said 'May it be so' and the hypocrite was not able to lift his right hand again.

The companions of the Prophet followed his example in stressing the use of the right hand while eating. Omar was Khalifa when he saw a man eating with his left hand and similarly advised him to eat with his right. The man answered 'My right is busy' Omar repeated his request and the man repeated his answer. Omar asked him 'What is it busy with?' The man answered that it had been severed in one of the battles. Omar blamed himself for neglecting such handicap and ordered the treasurer to provide the man with a servant to help him.

[4] If eating with your hand, use three fingers with small bites, lifting it gently with ease to your mouth. Close your mouth while eating to avoid unnecessary noises.

[5] To eat on the floor is nearer to what the Prophet used to do. However, there is no problem to eat at a table. Imam Ghazali said, 'To eat at a table is to make eating easier and there is nothing against that.'

[6] Do not start eating ahead of the elders or the nobles. If you are the elder, do not commence eating before everyone is at the table.

[7] It is preferred that eating should not be conducted in silence. It is good manners to talk during meals. Topics should be nice stories suitable for eating.

[8] At the end of the meal, if hands are to be washed, the elder or the noble should be asked to proceed first.

[9] At the end of a meal, thank Allah as in the Hadith reported by Abo Dawood and Nasa'i in 'the deeds of day and night.' Thank Allah who fed us and provided us with drink. It is very appropriate to make a prayer for your hosts as it is reported by Muslim that Al-Migdad ibn Al-Aswad reported that the Prophet said, 'May Allah feed those who have fed us, and provide drinks to those who provided us with it.'

[10] Do not express your disapproval or dislike of certain foods. Either eat it or pass it over quietly. Abu Huraira reported that 'the Prophet never expressed his dislike of a food. If he liked it he will eat it. If he disliked it, he will set aside.'

[11] Do not put in your plate more than can eat. Leftovers could be thrown out, it shouldn't, and wasted. Put smaller portions twice rather than one large portion that you will not eat. The Prophet did not approve of leaving any food in a plate since as he said 'You don't know which portion is blessed'. Food is a blessing of Allah, to misuse it is contrary to Islam. Do not forget the poor and the needy who do not have the portion you are throwing away

THE MANNERS OF DRINKING

[1] Drinking manners are no less important.

[2] To start in the name of Allah is a must. Use your right hand to drink. Abo Dawood and Tirmizi related that Hafsa (RA) said 'the Prophet used his right hand for eating and drinking. He used his left for other things [such as personal hygiene].'

[3] Do not pour your drink down your throat in one gulp. Drink it in three sips. Ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet said 'Do not drink like a camel. Drink twice or thrice.

[4] Say the name of Allah before drinking. Thank Allah after finishing.

[5] Do not exhale in your glass. This will irritate others and will smudge the glass or the cup. Ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet forbade exhaling in a glass or puffing into it.

[6] Do not drink directly from the jug or the container. Beside being unhygienic behaviour, others may want to drink after you who could be irritated. Abo Huraira narrated that the Prophet forbade drinking directly from the mouth of the sheepskin or the flask.

AVOID GLUTTONY

[1] Modesty is the crown (hallmark) of the common people. Keep this crown on your head if invited to a feast or if you are presented with food or drink.

[2] Do not be gluttonous devouring food as if you have not eaten for a long time, or as if you have not seen such excellent food before.

[3] Do not sample every dish on the table. People, even generous hosts disapprove of greedy eaters.

[5] Be reasonable and moderate in enjoying the generosity of your hosts.

GOLD AND SILVER CUTLERY

[1] Do not eat using golden or silver plates or cutlery. This goes against the spirit of Islamic modesty. Pomposity is not an Islamic trait.

[2] Bukhari narrated that Huzaifa said the Prophet said 'Do not drink in golden or silver cups nor eat in such plates.' If you were a guest, simply ask your host to replace it with another one.

WEDDINGS

WEDDINGS ARE PART OF THE PROPHET'S TRADITION

[1] If invited to a marriage ceremony or wedding celebration, you should accept the invitation unless it may include prohibited acts.

Attending a wedding is part of the Sunnah, as Islam regards marriage as an act of worship and obedience to Allah.

[2] Islam endorses performing marriage contracts in the mosque. Muslim jurists stipulated that this is based on a Hadith reported by Al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Maja: 'Publicize the marriage, execute it at the mosques and celebrate it with drums.'

Another Hadith reported by Imam Ahmad and Al-Hakim and others supports the first Hadith: 'Publicize Marriage.' It also supported by a third Hadith reported by Ahmad, Al-Tirmidhi, Al-Nasa'i and Ibn Maja: 'The difference between a legitimate (Halal) and an illegitimate (Haram) marriage is the presence of voices and drums.'

There is no dispute among Muslim scholars that in a wedding celebration, the Prophet (PBUH) allowed women to use drums. The most valid opinion among many scholars is that men can also use drums in order to publicize the marriage thus making it known near and far. The noble Islamic purpose of such publicity is to distinguish between an evil and illicit relationship and a pure and desirable marriage.

[3] Attending a wedding is one of the rights of brotherhood among Muslims. It fulfills the requirement of publicity, reinforces the need to attest to the sanctity of the marriage, and it gives a chance to join your brethren as they complete the second half of Islam, and while you pray that they remain observant of the first half. Attending a wedding also honours the husband and wife by having their relatives and friends share in their happiness. It blesses them with guests that pray to Allah for their righteousness, success, affluence and prosperity.

THE MANNERS OF ATTENDING WEDDINGS

[1] If invited, attend the celebration as if you have answered an invitation to a blessed occasion, and a delightful and acclaimed celebration, as the Prophet proclaimed you should.

[2] Dress appropriately, for the Prophet's companions used to dress properly at weddings.

[3] When initiating or sharing in discussions, make sure your conversation fits the happy occasion and does not include depressing and distasteful subject matter that could spoil the occasion.

[4] It is recommended that you congratulate the bride and bridegroom, by reciting the Hadith narrated by Abu Dawood and Al-Tirmidhi, and authenticated by Ibn Maja and Al-Hakim, whereby the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'May Allah bless your side and bless your counterpart and may Allah tie your union with virtue.' Do not use the commonly used phrase 'With comfort and children,' because this was the phrase used by the people of ignorance (Jahilia).

The Prophet (PBUH) prohibited such a saying, and Allah, with His blessing, replaced it by the prayer of his Prophet (PBUH). Al-Bukhari reported that 'Ayisha (RA) said: 'When the Prophet (PBUH) married me, my mother led me into the house where women of Ansar were celebrating. They congratulated me with reward, blessing, and 'best of luck' wishes.

[5] Islam permits women to celebrate a wedding by singing tasteful songs, accompanied by a drum beat. Such poems and songs should not promote lust, lewd desire, or portray physical beauty. Instead, they should sing delightful and decent songs to express their happiness with the marriage.

Al-Bukhari reported that 'Ayisha (RA) said: 'A bride was led to her Ansar husband. The Prophet (PBUH) said: O Ayisha, did you not have merriment? The Ansar love fun.' He was referring to the singing and beating of drums.